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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1575
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5386
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4117
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 4615
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 006280

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: PRO-THAKSIN PARTY TRYING TO ASSEMBLE COALITION
GOVERNMENT

REF: A. BANGKOK 6238 (NORTHEASTERN SITUATION)

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 6170 (PRASONG'S VIEWS)

[1](#)C. BANGKOK 6069 (PRACHAI CONVICTED)

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James F. Entwistle, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The pro-Thaksin People's Power Party (PPP) is working to draw sufficient support from other parties to form a government. There are enough small and medium size political parties that none of them can assert it holds the definitive swing vote. We have not yet seen any strong indication that military or interim government officials are exerting significant influence on inter-party negotiations. End Summary.

NO SINGLE SWING VOTE

[1](#)2. (SBU) As the pro-Thaksin People's Power Party (PPP) negotiates with potential partners to form a government, it has a healthy range of options. If the current preliminary results stand, PPP, needing the support of nine other House members in addition to its own 232, will have the necessary votes to form a government if it wins the support of any of three small or medium size parties: Chart Thai (37 seats), Motherland (25 seats), or Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana (nine seats). Alternatively, PPP would command majority support in the House if it pulls together the two smallest parties, Matchima (seven seats) and Pracharaj (five seats).

[1](#)3. (C) Even if PPP finds itself unable to attract formal coalition partners, PPP would have the option of luring defectors from other parties in order to win majority support for a resolution nominating its Party Leader, Samak Sundaravej, as Prime Minister. According to the 2007

Constitution, House members are not subject to sanction if they deviate from their parties' policies when electing the Prime Minister. PPP is in a good position to lure such support; it is widely perceived as having substantial funds at its disposal, and newly-elected MPs will be eager to replenish the bank accounts that they depleted during their campaigns.

¶4. (C) A high ranking PPP official told us recently that his party aims not just to eke out a majority, but to build a coalition of 280 seats or more, in order to establish a sense of stability (and, we would add, legitimacy). PPP's hope appears to be to draw the maximum number of partners while keeping to a minimum the number of cabinet seats it concedes to them. Most others -- aside from the second-place Democrat Party, which has publicly refused to join PPP -- appear to want to maximize their own importance in what many people expect to be a PPP-led government.

¶5. (SBU) PPP's potential partners must play a delicate balancing act. They have reason to play "hard to get," to extract high compensation for their support -- but they also should worry that if they hold out too long, PPP could leave them on the sidelines, empty-handed. One politician from Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana used an apt analogy, saying the smaller parties were "sitting in the fishbowl," referring to an arrangement common in Thai brothels wherein prostitutes sit behind a glass wall, waiting to be chosen by a client.

MOTHERLAND: TO THE MILITARY, AND BEYOND

¶6. (C) The Motherland Party controls a large enough block of MPs to provide PPP with a clear majority, and Motherland's agreement to join with PPP would surely prompt all other small parties to jump on the bandwagon. Perhaps equally

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important, many people believe the party has close ties to the military (see, for example, ref A and B).

¶7. (C) Just prior to the election, a senior PPP official told us that the Motherland Party had rejected PPP's overtures; negotiations between the two parties appear to be ongoing, however. PPP advisor Jakrapob Penkair told us on December 27 that PPP was negotiating simultaneously with Motherland's leadership and with various sympathetic Motherland MPs-elect from constituencies with widespread support for deposed Prime Minister Thaksin. Jakrapob asserted that Motherland represented PPP's channel to the military and beyond (read: the Palace), and that reaching an accommodation with Motherland would resolve any concerns about the military potentially moving to block PPP's formation of a government.

¶8. (C) Jakrapob had complained publicly that retired General (and Privy Council President) Prem Tinsulanonda had summoned the Motherland and Chart Thai leaders to his residence on the election night. On December 27, though, Jakrapob told us he had no further indications Prem was trying to influence coalition negotiations. Since the election, Prem, Army Commander Anupong Paojinda, and Supreme Commander Boonsrang Niumpradit have publicly called for national unity and have not laid down any public markers that they would find a PPP government unacceptable.

CHART THAI TYING ITSELF TO MOTHERLAND

¶9. (C) A top Chart Thai official had assured us before the election that Chart Thai leader Banharn Silapa-Archa would refuse to work with Thaksin's PPP, and Banharn's public statements indicated a commitment to cooperation with the Democrat Party. However, few figures in Thai politics appear more pragmatic and self-interested than Banharn, and it is difficult to believe he would resign himself to Chart Thai's exclusion from a PPP-led government. In a December 26

conversation, Chart Thai MP-elect Varawut Silapa-Archa (Banharn's son) told us that Chart Thai aimed simply to promote stability by ensuring that any governing coalition would be large enough to govern effectively. Toward this end, Chart Thai and the Motherland Party had formed a "pact" to negotiate as a block with other parties. While we are skeptical that this agreement will restrain either party from pursuing what it perceives as the most beneficial course of action for itself, Varawut described the pact as "pretty firm."

¶10. (C) PPP's Jakrapob told us that the Chart Thai-Motherland pact would simply provide useful political cover for Banharn to ditch the Democrats and align himself with PPP. If the Motherland Party were to join with PPP, this would signal the blessing (or resignation) of Thailand's critical behind-the-scenes royalists, rendering moot any commitment that Banharn had made to such figures not to support Thaksin, Jakrapob indicated.

OTHERS HAVE REASON TO WORK WITH THAKSIN

¶11. (C) While the mid-sized parties garner more media attention, smaller parties, which control enough votes to provide PPP with a majority, have motivation to join with PPP:

- Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana is home to numerous former Thai Rak Thai (TRT) leaders. An official from Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana told us on December 27 that one of her party's key behind-the-scenes figures, Suwat Liptapanlop, was particularly eager to regain the political rights he had lost by virtue of the Constitutional Tribunal's May dissolution of TRT; restoring those rights is one of PPP's announced objectives. (Suwat's view and motivation may carry particular weight, as five of Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana's nine MPs-elect are from Suwat's stronghold, Nakhon Ratchasima

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province.) Nevertheless, our contact told us that Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana had not yet committed to any particular coalition.

- Although Matchima Party Leader Prachai Leophairatana was an ardent foe of Thaksin, Prachai did not win a seat in the House and he appears likely to shift his focus from party affairs to his personal legal problems (ref C). Even before the election, he appeared uninterested in funding Matchima candidates outside of the Bangkok region. Some news reports indicate Prachai has already deserted the party. Of the seven Matchima figures who won election (all from outside Bangkok), five have prior direct or family associations with TRT.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) Ongoing negotiations may be contentious and opaque -- particularly since the election results are not yet final, and disqualifications could alter the parties' relative values. But even though PPP may face some resistance in coalition talks, it clearly has the initiative and momentum from its election day victory. The Democrats' only scenario for blocking PPP would entail drawing nearly every other party into its orbit, even though PPP, needing fewer partners than the Democrats, can offer more cabinet seats in exchange for some of these parties' support. It is, therefore, difficult to imagine that PPP will prove unable to form the next government, although we are waiting to see the smaller parties commit publicly to the coalition.

ENTWISTLE